



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kentucky Officials Continue to Monitor Chemical as it Moves Through the Ohio River

Contaminant levels below threshold for public risk

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 15, 2014) – The Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection (DEP) has joined with the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) to establish an incident command center in Cincinnati to better coordinate and communicate sampling and data collection as the plume of chemical from last week's West Virginia spill moves down the Ohio River.

"Although the contaminant levels remain below the threshold for public safety concerns, we will continue our monitoring efforts as a precaution," said DEP Commissioner R. Bruce Scott. "Staff from the Kentucky Division of Water has been working with ORSANCO since the plume passed by the intakes for the Ashland and Russell water systems to make certain any of the water districts along the Ohio River responded quickly and appropriately in maintaining a safe water supply to their customers. This has been accomplished with no reports of problems from any Kentucky system thus far."

The plume is expected to pass the Northern Kentucky Water District and Cincinnati water intakes later today and reach Louisville Friday. Scott said DEP officials have been in constant contact with those districts, each of which has adequate systems to filter the water and provide safe drinking supplies to their customers.

"Should these districts choose to close their intakes while the plume passes, we have been assured they have adequate water supplies in their reservoirs so that this closure would go unnoticed by their customers," Scott said.

Kentucky Emergency Management has been monitoring the situation and has been coordinating daily meetings and conference calls with appropriate responding agencies and will continue until any perceived threat passes.

The chemical 4-methylcyclohexane methanol, known as MCHM, was released into the Elk River, which flows into the Kanawha River at Charleston, W.Va. The Kanawha River flows into the Ohio River at Point Pleasant, W.Va. An estimated 300,000 residents in West Virginia were unable to use the water supply for a number of days.

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